

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 021443
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S E C R E T STATE 021443

NODIS
FOR DR BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT JIDDA 0632 ACTION SECSTATE 26 JAN 78

QUOTE

S E C R E T JIDDA 0632

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MASS, SA, US
SUBJECT: F-15'S

REF: (A) JIDDA 618, (B) STATE 19647

1. SUMMARY: DRAWING ON CONTENTS OF REFTEL (B), I DISCUSSED WITH PRINCE SAUD THE QUESTION OF THE TIMING FOR SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS OF SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA. HIS REACTION WAS SWIFT AND ADAMANTLY NEGATIVE: "THERE IS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THE QUESTION OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA." PRINCE SAUD PREDICTED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 021443

DIRE CONSEQUENCES TO THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP "IN SPITE OF ALL OUR EFFORTS TO THE CONTRARY" IF SALE WERE DELAYED. THERE WOULD BE WIDESPREAD MISUNDERSTANDING NOT ONLY WITH PUBLIC BUT ALSO WITH INFORMED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. HE STATED FLATLY THAT DELAY WAS FAILURE AND THAT FAILURE WOULD TOTALLY UNDERMINE HIS POSITION AND THAT OF HIS GOVERNMENT VIS-A-VIS OTHER ARAB STATES. IN SHORT PRINCE SAUD

BELIEVES IT BETTER TO FACE CONGRESS AND THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT CONFRONTATION THAN TO FACE THE HUMILIATION AND LOSS OF FACE THAT WOULD COME FROM DELAY OF SUBMISSION OF SALE TO CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. I OPENED MY DISCUSSION WITH PRINCE SAUD USING THE CAREFULLY CHOSEN LANGUAGE PROVIDED IN REFTEL (B). NOTWITHSTANDING MY EMPHASIS ON PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT TO PRINCE FAHD TO SUBMIT SALE TO CONGRESS NOR MY EFFORTS TO DESCRIBE POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES WHICH SUBMISSION AT THIS TIME MIGHT CAUSE FOR ADMINISTRATION, SAUD WAS ADAMANT THAT SUBMISSION SHOULD BE MADE TO CONGRESS AS SCHEDULED REGARDLESS OF CURRENT PRESSURES. HIS MAJOR THEME WAS THAT PURCHASE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA WAS BASED ON SOUND PLANNING AND GOOD JUDGEMENT BY BOTH SAUDI AND AMERICAN EXPERTS AND THAT PURCHASE OF F-15'S WAS SOLELY FOR DEFENSE OF KINGDOM.

HE POINTED OUT THAT OUR COMMITMENT TO SELL F-15'S WAS BASED ON CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTED BETWEEN U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA AND THAT THIS PROCESS OF PLANNING, DECISION AND IMPLEMENTATION HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS OR PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT HAVE ARISEN BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT.

3. PRINCE SAUD SAID THAT ANY DELAY IN SUBMISSION OF SALE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 021443

TO CONGRESS WILL HAVE MAJOR IMPACT ON U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS. NO ONE WOULD UNDERSTAND WHY U.S. IS REFUSING TO GIVE CLOSE FRIEND THE MEANS TO DEFEND HERSELF. IT WILL REDUCE SAUDI INFLUENCE WITH OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AT VERY TIME SAUDI ARABIA IS TRYING TO CONVINCE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES THAT U.S. IS FRIEND AND CAN BE RELIED ON. HE NOTED THAT ONLY TODAY HE HAD RECEIVED MESSAGE FROM HIS AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON REGARDING NEW MILITARY SALES TO JORDAN WHICH WOULD BE FINANCED BY SAUDI MONEY. HOW CAN U.S. POSSIBLY JUSTIFY SALE OF ARMS TO ANOTHER ARAB GOVERNMENT USING SAUDI MONEY WHEN AT SAME TIME IT REFUSES DIRECT SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA. THIS, PRINCE SAUD SAID, IS IMPOS- SIBLE TO EXPLAIN TO OUR MILITARY.

4. PRINCE SAUD REJECTED ARGUMENT THAT CURRENT IMPASSE IN MIDDLE EAST TALKS WAS SERIOUS FACTOR IN CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA. HE SAID THOSE OPPOSED TO THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED STATES WOULD ALWAYS BE OPPOSED TO SUCH SALES AND WOULD SEIZE ANY ISSUE OF THE MOMENT TO REJECT SUCH A SALE. THIS IS THEIR WAY OF DESTROYING THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP. HE REITERATED THAT SAUDI ARABIA

WANTS A MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND THAT DECISION
WAS A POLITICAL ONE. IF THE U.S. HAS MADE THAT SAME POLI-
TICAL COMMITMENT, THE ADMINISTRATION MUST BE PREPARED TO
MOVE AHEAD AND SUBMIT THE SALE REQUEST TO CONGRESS.
PRINCE SAUD SAID BOTH SIDES MUST DO ALL IN THEIR POWER
TO MINIMIZE THE LEGISLATIVE DANGERS THAT LIE AHEAD,
BUT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT IF THE ADMINISTRATION PUT ITS
ENTIRE SUPPORT BEHIND THE SALE, CONGRESS WOULD APPROVE.

5. IN CLOSING, PRINCE SAUD REITERATED THAT FAILURE TO
FOLLOW THROUGH ON SALE OF F-15'S WILL HAVE DIRE CONSE-
QUENCES -- CONSEQUENCES WE WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH BUT
CONSEQUENCES WHICH WILL CAUSE TREMENDOUS DAMAGE TO SAG
BECAUSE COMMON SAUDIS AS WELL AS THOSE KNOWLEDGEABLE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 021443

PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT COMPREHEND U.S. GOVERNMENT
DECISION. HE underscored that decision was totally up
to U.S. as there was no decision to be made on Saudi side.
DELAY IS FAILURE. HE REMINDED US OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S
COMMITMENT, INCLUDING HIS STATEMENT UPON ARRIVAL AT THE
AIRPORT IN RIYADH TO THE CHIEF OF THE AIR COMMAND:
"I HAVE SOME PLANES FOR YOU. WHEN ARE YOU COMING TO GET
THEM?" THE PRESIDENT SPOKE OPENLY IN PUBLIC
AND WAS QUOTED IN ALL THE NEWSPAPERS. IT WOULD BE
IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO EXPLAIN IF THERE WERE A DELAY.
THE ANTI-SAUDI LOBBY HAS THE ADMINISTRATION IN A BIND
DELIBERATELY. TO DELAY SALE IS WHAT THEY WANT. TO
COMBINE SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA WITH SALES TO OTHER COUNTRIES
IS TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE ADMINISTRATION THE USE OF ARMS
SALES AS A TOOL OF PRESSURE. THERE IS NO OPTION.
WE MUST PRESENT SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA AS SINGLE
ITEM AND FIGHT IT ON ITS MERITS. IF WE WIN, IT WILL
SOLVE MANY OTHER PROBLEMS. WE NEED ONLY TO KNOW THAT
THE ADMINISTRATION WILL USE ALL ITS RESOURCES IN SUPPORT
OF SALE.
WEST
UNQUOTE VANCE".

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